

EDITORIAL

COVID-19 Pandemic Status in Africa

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The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), since it was first discovered in China in the late November 2019, ravaged almost all countries and territories in the world. The World Health Organization declared the outbreak to be a public health emergency of international concern on 30th January 2020 and recognized it as a pandemic on 11th March 2020 (1,2). Till today (end of August 2020), 213 countries and territories of the world reported Covid-19 cases where in total over 25 million cases are recorded.

In Africa, the first case of COVID-19 was reported on the 14th of February in Egypt, and in Sub-Saharan Africa on the 27th of February in Nigeria (3,4,5). This was over 1 month after the first case was reported in China. This time lapse helped countries in the African continent to prepare themselves for the inevitable outbreak. In the early period of the pandemic, most of the reported cases from African countries were imported. While the pandemic is progressing, local transmission surpassed imported cases and the doubling time shortened (4). By now, almost all new COVID-19 cases in Africa are from community transmissions.

Since the first African case of COVID-19 report in mid February, 57 African countries and territories have been affected by the pandemic. Until the end of August 2020, COVID-19 infected over 1.2 million people and caused over 29,000 deaths in Africa (5). The burden of the disease varies from country to country. Starting from notification of the disease from China, African countries exercised various tested COVID-19 transmission prevention packages though the intensity varied from country to country. Many African countries registered

desirable results because of their aggressive interventions in combating the virus transmission. Of those reported cases, over two-third are from only four countries and half of the cases are from South Africa (5).

Overall, after it peaked in June and July, the COVID-19 daily new cases in the African continent are slowing down in recent weeks though there is still variability among member countries. South Africa as it reported the majority of the COVID-19 cases, it is as well recording a remarkable downward trajectory. Significant reduction in incidence of COVID-19 cases is also demonstrated in Nigeria, Ghana, Algeria and Kenya in the past weeks while it appeared peaking in Ethiopia. Though the observed declines are encouraging, the figures should be carefully interpreted as they may be affected by many factors, including the current testing capacity, testing strategy and delays in reporting.

Those countries with a declining trend should not be satisfied with temporary achievements; rather, they must remain resilient and watchful to sustain the observed downward trend. As it is observed in many western counties, there could be resurgence of cases if appropriate transition measures are not taken. In maintaining the declining trend, African countries need to continue working on community sensitization and mobilization, physical distancing measures, hand washing, case tracing and detection and sustaining essential health services.

The current issue of the Ethiopian Journal of Health Sciences, the fifth regular issue for the year 2020, contains an editorial, twenty original articles, two reviews, two case reports and a letter to the editor focusing on various topics. One of the original articles

and the letter to the editor in this issue deal with Corona Virus Disease 2019.

I invite readers to read through these articles and appreciate or utilize the contents. I also urge readers to forward comments and suggestions to the editor or the corresponding authors.

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